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ABSTRACT

An intercultural training workshop including orientation and travel to France is described. The program was made available to businessmen and women interested or involved in trade with France, to students in communications, foreign languages, and international business, and to community members. The program included pre-departure classes to prepare participants to maximize the benefits of their travel, activities in France that included visits to three multinational companies and to the commercial attache of the U.S. Embassy, and post-travel activities including reflection and evaluation of the program. The timeline for course development is provided, and challenges in program development are outlined, including: (1) the time required for transatlantic correspondence, (2) the need to follow established procedures, (3) the importance of involving the local and business community, (4) early advertisement, (5) in-country contacts, (6) the need for a French-speaker, (7) the need to provide authorities with information about the participants in advance, and (8) sponsoring college recognition of the costs and time commitment involved. The approaches and techniques used in planning the program, its goals, instructional materials, and classroom activities are also presented, in outline form. (MSE)

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THE HIGHLIGHTS AND PITFALLS OF DEVELOPING AN INTERCULTURAL WORKSHOP IN FRANCE

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THE HIGHLIGHTS AND PITFALLS OF DEVELOPING AN INTERCULTURAL WORKSHOP IN FRANCE

Presentation by Professors Cheri Frey-Hartel and Duffy Kasum, Cardinal Stritch College, Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

A year ago I had my first opportunity to attend this conference on Languages and Communications for World Business and the Professions sponsored by Eastern Michigan University. The workshops and conferences stressed the successful integration of business strategies, cultural awareness and communicative competency in foreign languages. I returned to Milwaukee convinced of the benefits to the business community and our students of offering a course patterned after prototype courses discussed at the conference. In our presentation this morning, my colleague, Cheri Frey-Hartel, and I will share both the successes and the problems encountered in developing the Intercultural Training Workshop: France. The course was a combination of three elements: pre-departure classes to prepare participants to maximize the benefits of their travel; in-France activities that included visits to three multinational companies and a visit with the commercial attache of the United States Embassy; and post-departure activities that included reflexion, evaluation, and critique of the program. The program was available to businessmen and women interested in marketing to France or already involved in the import/export business, to students in Communications, Foreign Languages, or International Business, and to interested members of the community. I will discuss the technical aspects of program development while Cheri will discuss the instructional techniques used.

WHY DEVELOP THIS COURSE?

We had the opportunity to ask ourselves this question over and over as the course progressed. The answers to this basic question varied depending on which stage we were at in the course. The main reasons for this course were as follows:

1. INTERNATIONAL INVESTMENT IN WISCONSIN

Wisconsin has experienced an increasing amount of international corporate activity. More than 18 Wisconsin companies have developed affiliates in France and a number of French companies have invested in Wisconsin. Although experts in their particular fields, many businessmen discover that they are not well prepared for the stresses, subtleties, and complexities of doing business with foreign nationals.

2. INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS PROGRAM

Cardinal Stritch College had just initiated an undergraduate major in International Business. It is the only college in the area to offer programs in international business specifically targeted at the undergraduate level.

3. INTERCULTURAL PROGRAM

The Communication Arts Department had begun a course in Intercultural Communications that was quite successful and in high demand. Students recognize the need for more effective communication based on an awareness and appreciation of cultural differences not only on an international basis but on a national and a local level as well.

4. FOREIGN LANGUAGE PROGRAM

I had been recently hired with a mandate to revitalize the foreign language program. At the present time, the College does not have a language requirement for the liberal arts degree but there is a solid commitment by the College that foreign languages be a viable option for the students.

Taking these four factors into account, we used an interdisciplinary approach to course development that would be beneficial to all concerned.

TIME LINE FOR DEVELOPMENT OF COURSE.

APRIL, 1986.

After returning from the conference, I met with the Academic Dean to discuss the details of the EMU conference and to propose a course that could be offered by the College using an interdisciplinary approach. With his support and encouragement, I began contacting travel agencies both local and national to determine the services available and to solicit bids.

MAY, 1986.

Meetings were held with faculty from the International Business Department and Communication Arts Department to solicit their input and support for the formation of the course. Research was conducted using Library resources to identify companies involved in international business in Wisconsin and to geographically locate those businesses that are in close proximity to Milwaukee. In addition, phone

calls were made to the United States Department of Commerce, the Milwaukee Association of Commerce, the Wisconsin Manufacturers Association, Forward Wisconsin, and the Milwaukee Journal. The phone calls served two purposes: to seek help to recognize companies that would be willing to collaborate on this project and to inform institutions of the innovative program being sponsored by the College.

JUNE, 1986.

The Course Proposal Outline for submission to the Undergraduate Curriculum Committee was finalized. We continued the bibliographic search and reading of books and articles as preparation for the development of the Student Workbook.

JULY, 1986.

Meetings were held with the local travel agent to finalize the travel portion of the course and to insure that the travel agent had a good knowledge of the academic portion of the program so that his agency could accurately answer questions that were directed to them. The brochures for the trip portion of the program were printed. Memos were sent to local companies asking for their help in arranging on-site visits in France with their counterparts. A week later, I phoned the same companies to explain our new program.

AUGUST, 1986.

The College sent press releases to local magazines and newspapers advertising the Intercultural Training Workshop: France.

SEPTEMBER, 1986.

The first class meeting was held to explain the details of the course and the travel portion of the trip. Letters were sent to the French Consul asking him to write introductory letters to the French companies on our behalf. These letters were followed by letters from the College explaining the course and requesting on-site visits.

OCTOBER - DECEMBER, 1986.

Pre-departure sessions continued. The Governor sent letters to the American companies requesting their support. Our Congressmen contacted the American Embassy in Paris

requesting their support. The Wisconsin World Trade Center became actively involved in establishing the multinational visits in France.

JANUARY, 1987.

Twenty-one participants spent a successful week in Paris experiencing cultural differences and learning about international trade options and opportunities.

THE PITFALLS.

The following is a list of un-anticipated difficulties that we encountered as we developed the technical aspect of the course and some suggestions for avoiding similar problems:

1. LENGTH OF TIME FOR TRANSATLANTIC CORRESPONDANCE.

From our experience, all transatlantic correspondance takes a much longer time and you can expect a 3-4 week delay in response to letters. Give the French Consul 3-4 weeks to prepare a letter of introduction before your follow-up letter is sent so that your letter does not arrive in advance of the Consul's letter.

2. NECESSITY TO FOLLOW ESTABLISHED PROCEDURES.

French companies have definite guidelines or protocol which must be recognized. Have your contact in the American company find out which procedures are required and follow them even if they seem laborious. We can't emphasize enough the importance of following correct procedures.

3. IMPORTANCE OF INVOLVING THE LOCAL BUSINESS AND POLITICAL COMMUNITY.

Research aside, the most important contacts we made for the eventual establishment of the three multinational company visits were because of aid from our Governor, Lieutenant Governor, Congressman, and the Wisconsin World Trade Center, a recently established organization for the promotion of international trade.

4. EARLY ADVERTISEMENT OF THE PROGRAM.

We began advertising in August for the January program. It would be best to begin advertisement of the program at least eight months in advance. Participants need the lead time to assess their financial resources available for the program, to get passports, visas, luggage, etc.

5. IN-COUNTRY CONTACT.

We did not have a faculty member in Paris in advance to meet personally with French Company representatives to finalize the details of the company visits. We did ask the Director of our French travel agency to make these contacts for us. However, we learned that this was not very acceptable. As a consequence, our final conference with a large multinational company (IBM) was not on the agenda until I contacted the Manager in person when the group arrived in Paris.

6. NECESSITY OF SOMEONE WHO CAN COMMUNICATE IN THE FOREIGN LANGUAGE OF THE COUNTRY VISITED.

Although all our correspondance indicated that the participants would need company presentations in English, we discovered that many details of the travel and company visits in France required someone who was fluent in the language and understood cultural differences to better negotiate problems as they occured.

7. WRITTEN LIST OF PASSPORT NUMBERS, BIRTHDATES, AND JOB TITLES OF PARTICIPANTS.

To visit the United States Embassy, it was necessary to furnish the above information a day in advance of our meeting. It was difficult to collect this information on site since participants were touring, working on different parts of the workbook activities, etc. Surprisingly, the French companies also required the above information and were particularly interested in job titles. In general, French companies do not promote visits to their corporate headquarters or their companies.

8. RECOGNITION BY THE COLLEGE OR UNIVERSITY OF THE TIME COMMITMENT AND FINANCES INVOLVED.

Neither Cheri nor I could have imagined the extra time required by this program at least on a first-time basis. There is a lot of correspondance involved both in French and English via letters and phone calls. Budget allocations for paper, printing, xeroxing, postage, etc. need to be considered in advance.

In conclusion, the program was even more successful than originally anticipated. No program is, however, perfect; we look forward to offering it again in the Fall and anticipate refining the program to keep abreast of the latest information and research available.

THE HIGHLIGHTS AND PITFALLS OF DEVELOPING AN INTERCULTURAL WORKSHOP
IN FRANCE
Presentation Outline Draft #1

I. Situation
   A. only 4 2-2½ hr. predeparture meetings
   B. student body was varied
      1. high school student
      2. traditional undergraduate students taking the course for credit
      3. nontraditional undergraduate students taking the course for credit
      4. adults presently doing business with the French
      5. adults wishing to do business with the French
      6. adults going to Paris for a vacation

II. Goals
   A. To sensitize individuals to culture in general and the French culture in specific
      1. to produce an understanding of the basic cultural values, world views, language, and non-verbal communicative techniques used by the French;
      2. to develop an appreciation of cultural differences and a positive response to these elements of the culture;
      3. to supply students with basic survival skills necessary in the French culture
   B. To incorporate a variety of educational/training strategies and techniques

III. Workbook
   A. Constructed from over 36 sources
   B. Provided a series of articles and portions of texts covering many areas
      1. from: how to convert fahrenheit to centrade
      2. to: a philisophical treatise on what it means to be French
   C. Provided an extensive annotated bibliography
      1. Intercultural Communication in general
      2. French Culture in specific
   D. Offered the students a variety of assignments to complete in order to earn their grade
      1. Grading based upon a point system with each assignment weighted differently
      2. Activities varied in degree of risk, involvement, and difficulty
      3. Activities were constructued with a focus on preparation, participation, and reflection
         a. before experience portion of activity
         b. during experience portion of activity
         c. after experience portion of activity
      4. (Optional) Provide a sample activity

IV. Classroom Activities
   A. Utilized a number of methods
      1. panel discussions by French and Belgium citizens
      2. educational videotapes
      3. popular French films
      4. simulations
      5. discussions
      6. group activities
      7. lecture/presentations

- due to time restrictions, IV will probably not be in Oral Presentation

V. How the workbook and the pre-departure meetings met the goals of inter-cultural training as posited by Warren and Adler (1977) and discussed by Gudykunst and Kim (1982)

A. To provide information on other cultures
   1. Culture General
      a. culture assimilator activity
      b. readings and lectures on terminology and impact of culture on communication
   2. Culture Specific
      a. articles/activities discussing the connotation of words, appropriate gestures and use of space, values
      b. assignments including the writing of a French Culture Resume and presenting of reports on the Cutural Heritage of France

B. To provide occupational skills to the individual in terms of the culture in which he or she will work
   1. In-country tours and presentations provided culture specific insight
      a. 3 Businesses (including IBM)
      b. Commercial Attache, US Embassy Paris
      c. Guidelines for questions to be asked during these visits were in the workbook
   2. Lecture and video (Going International: Managing the Overseas Experience) discussing the relationship of ICC and Business.

C. To develop tolerance of different attitudes, values and beliefs
   1. The goal was to supply information to develop the cognitive component of an attitude and experiences to develop the affective component
      a. Activities/Readings to learn about values and beliefs
      b. viewing of Small Change (Truffaut) and interactions with French citizens to promote empathy

D. To provide individuals with the culturally appropriate behavioral response
   1. Survival Language Skills were taught and practiced
   2. French/Belgium panel discussed appropriate behaviors
   3. Analysis of behaviors in Small Change through lecture and discussion

E. To help individuals deal with culture shock
   1. Simulation activity BAFA BAFA was done

F. To develop cultural self awareness.
   1. 'Other cultures might be' activity identified own culture as well as others
   2. Interpretations of how the French see us were given in lectures and panel discussions
   3. Activities reflecting identification of major American values as identified in Readings ("What are our Major Cultural Values? What do we value most?" Samovar) and behavioral representations in everyday life

G. To develop in the individual an orientation that will enable that person to experience a new culture in a positive way
   1. DIE (describe, interpret, evaluate) technique was taught and diaries utilizing the approach were kept by student while in France
   2. Article and discussion of the distinction between a stereotype and generalization were part of the workbook and course
   3. Article on the characteristics of the cross-culturally effective individual ("Human Communication and Cross-Cultural Effectiveness", Ruben) was read

4. The student was put at ease by having many major needs met.
   a. how to take a metro
   b. how to ask for and interpret directions
   c. how to place orders and make purchases

Gudykunst, W.B. & Hammer, M.R. Basic training design: approaches to intercultural training. Handbook of Intercultural Training. New York: Pergamon Press, 1982. 1, 118-154.

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